THEATERS — MOTION PICTURES

New York Tribune

MUSIC — ART

PART III EIGHT PAGES — SUNDAY, MARCH 28, 1920 — PART III EIGHT PAGES

The STAGE and Its PEOPLE

Gladys Hurlbut in "Mrs. Jimmie Thompson." WHITE STUDIO PHOTO

Ann Mason in "The Acquittal" EDWARD THAYER MONROE PHOTO

Regina Wallace in "The Ouija Board" CAMPBELL STUDIOS PHOTO

Ed Wynn in his Carnival April 5th ABBE PHOTO

Helen MacKellar in "The Storm" ABBE PHOTO

Adele Astaire in "Apple Blossoms." PHOTO ALFRED CHENEY JOHNSTON

As We Were Saying—

By Heywood Broun

A FEW seasons ago, when we were much younger, we made a point of going to all the little theaters up the alleys. We praised their products as vigorously as we could, and with no great discrimination perhaps, to such an extent that a more mature critic remarked that if any theatrical organization should hire an old cowshed and begin a series of performances as the Barnyard Players we would undoubtedly go crazy with rapture.

Now, in our middle age, when much of our venturesomeness is gone and when we find it hard to sally off to the frontier posts of the drama, we realize that we were not as chuckle-headed as some of our friends thought. To be sure, some of the things which the experimental theaters presented were pretty bad, but, after all, experiments are supposed to deal with extremes. The alchemist is equally prepared to find gold or to have his whole apparatus explode and fill his laboratory with brown fumes and a noisome odor. Not a few of the little theaters have blown up, but in the wreckage there is a hard and solid residue which looks a good deal like gold. Three of the finest productions of the New York theaters this season derive directly from sources largely scorned by the conservative persons of the theater. Eugene O'Neill's "Beyond the Horizon" might never have been written but for the opportunities which were afforded him by the Provincetown and the Washington Square Players. "Mamma's Affair," by Rachel Barton Butler, was influenced, even if it did not originate, in Professor Baker's course at Radcliffe, and the Theater Guild, which has covered itself with honor by its production of "Jane Clegg," is the illegitimate nephew of the Washington Square Players.

It does not seem to us that any of the things which have been done in the out-of-the-way places this year have shown half as much promise as the experiments of the alley theaters of two or three seasons ago. Perhaps we are solidifying. It may be that when new and strange authors appear in another season or so we will shout "Bolsheviki" and ask querulously why anybody should try to improve upon the methods of David Belasco. We hope not. Though we have seen some fearsome things in the alleys, dank tragedies and incomprehensible whimsies, we have always felt that they deserved a certain tenderness of treatment. Whenever a man cuts loose from the conventions of the theater, whenever he embarks on a venture in which he steers by his own intuition and none of the fixed stars, it is always a question whether he is going to do something singularly fine or make an ass of himself. If the doubters had been correct, Columbus might have sailed straight off the edge of the world, which would have been a pretty good joke on him.

Nothing very significant is apt to be done in any art unless it is accompanied by abject failures as well. After all, the dramatist who amounts to anything is a gambler who says "shoot it all." The man who sets out to write a pretty good play is as inept as the housewife who would go to market for pretty good eggs. One may enjoy a book in moderation. He can skip the parts which bore him. He can put it down and rest and then go on. But a play demands that it be heard from beginning to end. The dramatist wants your unqualified enthusiasm or your scorn. He ought to write in such a way that at the end of the performance everybody in the house will want to pull his carriage to the hotel or ride him out of town on a rail. Of all the arts the theater should be the most violent and the most venturesome, and if a playwright has honestly staked his all on a turn of the wheel, the least a critic can do when chance blasts the gambler is to slip at least 10 cents' worth of sympathy in his pocket to break the long journey home.

Florenz Ziegfeld has been supreme for so many seasons as the producer who best understood the business of making musical comedy beautiful that "What's in a Name?" came as something of a surprise last week. In some respects John Murray Anderson has done better than his rival. Though the sets for the new musical revue may not be quite as opulent as those of Urban, they are more imaginative. The revue at the Maxine Elliott has the merit of being no haphazard venture, as so many musical shows seem to be, but a production built upon a very definite theory of decoration. Mr. Anderson has shown that it is possible to create an atmosphere for a musical comedy song just as much as for a poetic play by Dunsany. The production by no means shows the same taste and intelligence in music or in book as it does in decoration, but this is the invariable failing of American revues. At the same time, it is only fair to say that Olin Howland and Herbert Williams are generously humorous and that in Beatrice Herford "What's in a Name?" boasts the most facile and subtle monologist whom our theater has known.

Few Real Women Roles In Musical Comedies, Says the New "Irene"

Irene, the elephant on the dressing table, did not move a muscle, but Irene, the shop girl, babbled on and on, like the proverbial brook.

"There, I am talking again, ain't I?" she says in the play when, as a society girl, she lapses into the shop girl vernacular for a moment, and the same words might have been apropos in the dressing room interview. But this is not meant as a criticism of Adele Rowland, who has taken the title rôle formerly played by Edith Day. She talks rapidly, she jokes, she grimaces, she frowns, but she is always interesting.

"This is one of the few times that I have ever had an opportunity to act in a musical comedy. They never let a woman act in a musical comedy. They never make her a real character. They seem to think that all she has to do is to go on, show herelf, sing a little, and then go off again. I could count the real parts that have been written for women in musical comedies on the fingers of one hand. Irene is the first real, honest-to-goodness part I have ever had. Patsy, in 'The Only Girl,' came the nearest to being a part, but in that I was really myself. I went on and clowned. I've been in musical plays when I could say to myself, 'Now I must go on and do that,' but in 'Irene' there is never a moment like that."

George Cohan's Daughter Georgette, After Eleven Weeks on the Stage, Decides She's an Emotional Actress

GEORGE M. COHAN
Presents
GEORGETTE COHAN AND HIMSELF
in
"THE ——"
By
GEORGE M. COHAN
at the
George M. Cohan Theater

An announcement like the above would be ideal, says Georgette, daughter of the popular producer-author-actor, who has come to America after an absence of seven years. One day her father offers her a weekly salary of $10,000 to act under his management. The next he buys her expensive jewels, so happy is he to see her again after her long absence abroad. When she was last here in 1913 she was a schoolgirl not yet in her teens. Now she is in her twentieth year and has completed the first eleven weeks of her stage career, acting in Manchester and London.

Daughter of Ethel Levey and George M. Cohan, she has much of her father's vivacity and a good deal of his conversational manner. She says she is not adapted for musical comedy, so it probably will not be possible to tell whether she delivers her notes in the characteristic Cohan manner. Georgette is slight, her hair is reddish brown and her eyes are light brown. When she talks she betrays the fact that she has been to school in France and that she has lived in Paris by her expressive, almost Gallic, gestures.

"I know my London and love it," she said, "but everything seems so old in Europe, you become so conservative, that it is refreshing to come to America. In the few days that I have been here I have traveled fifteen hundred miles. It is remarkable how one is able to travel here."

Georgette was born in Los Angeles in the first year of the present century, and was taken to school in France when a very little girl. This is only her third visit to the United States since she first left its shores. She has been to school in Paris and England, has studied ballet dancing with M. Ray-

Continued on next page

Youngsters Who Trail "The Piper" Make Merry as Just Themselves At a Rehearsal and Interview

When the present-day stage children grow up the theatrical press agent may find himself a relic of antiquity, judging from very recent observations. It was at a rehearsal of the children in Josephine Preston Peabody's "The Piper." Tawny-haired tots of three, four and five; golden-curled youngsters of eight and "leading" men and women of ten and eleven were telling of their experiences with the piper, were laughing, shouting and romping about as they do in Hamelin. One or two of them had been told of the presence of the writer, who, wholly off his guard, was glancing through the program of the production, now at the Fulton Theater, for special matinees. A lull came in the rehearsal, and suddenly, in one concerted rush, they made for the representative of The Tribune.

"Have you got my name down there? It is Dolly Tigue, and my brother's name is Vernon Tigue," said one enterprising miss of six or seven, who spoke first. Immediately there was a chorus of children's voices, shouting names, telling stage experiences, entreating and commanding that they be published.

"I was with Ann Pennington and Gail Kane," lisped blond little May Ward, a miniature Mae Murray, who is not yet old enough to go to school, "but I don't remember the name of the play."

Augustin Duncan, under whose direction the play has been produced, called to them, and they came immediately, intensely interested in the work of the rehearsal. Every suggestion was responded to with surprising alacrity. The children are quick to interpret the director's wishes and are self-critical. Nearly all of them, except those who are too young, attend the Professional Children's School.

Frequent time for relaxation was given. They pirouetted, turned somersaults, practiced dancing steps, played catch. Chubby little Leonard Guion, a flaxen-haired little man of three, whose brother, Raymond, eleven years old, is an experienced actor and one of the "leading" men, ran around the practice room as fast as his short, stocky legs would carry him, followed by some of

Continued on next page

New Theatrical Offerings of the Week

MONDAY—At the Princess Theater, Joseph Klaw will present "Mrs. Jimmie Thompson," a comedy by Norman S. Rose and Edith Ellis. The scenes are laid in New York City and the characters include a young woman of the business world, who sighs for a wedding ring; an evader of domestic ties; a manicurist by trade, who is a philosopher by nature; the head salesman for a pickle factory; a retired theatrical star, who conducts a boarding house; a practical joker, and a maiden lady with a dark secret. These will be played by Gladys Hurlbut, George L. Spaulding, Peggy Boland, Warren W. Krech, Minnie Phillips, Richard Tabor and Anita Rothe. The production was staged by Miss Ellis.

At the Bijou Theater, A. H. Woods will present "The Ouija Board," by Crane Wilbur. The play deals with the question of spiritualism in a new way. In the cast are Edward Ellis, Crane Wilbur, George Gaul, Regina Wallace, Howard Lang, William Ingersoll, Stewart E. Wilson, Ruth Hammond, George Dannenborg and John Wray.

Euripides Quits Classic Halls of Hades to View His 'Medea' in New York

AS a comfort-loving soul, we had taken an extra seat for the matinee performance of Euripides' "Medea" at the Garrick, and had stowed away our hat and coat with the maximum of comfort and safety. Then we turned as the curtain went up and displayed the dimly lighted space before Medea's palace in Corinth, where the entire action of the play takes place.

Our eyes had barely adjusted themselves to the new light when we began to notice a very persistent pressure on our elbow. Turning, we discovered in the seat to our right a benevolent-looking old gentleman with a long white beard, his eyes focused on the stage, a smile of tolerant interest on his lips. In spite of our respect for white hairs, we were angry for a moment, until we looked down and discovered that he was not sitting on our hat and coat, but in some strange manner was managing to sit through them. Curiosity overcame the temporary anger and we bent over to the stranger with a whispered question:

"How do you manage to sit through those clothes?"

"It's a way we have in old Hades," he whispered back, with a wheezy chuckle at his witticism. "I hadn't seen the play in some two hundred years, when I heard of its presentation here. So here I am."

"But—but who in—or rather—who are you?"

"Wait till some of these young girls in the audience begin to cry 'Author! Author!' he confided, "and you'll learn who I am."

"Not Euripides?"

"The same," he answered, "and no matter what Aristophanes may have said to you or what Sophocles may have insinuated, this is a good show."

"Good show," we retorted scornfully. "We'd like to hear you say that about the 'Medea' in academic circles. You wouldn't be invited again. That's a very lowbrow attitude, Euripides."

"That's just the trouble with being an immortal," he sighed. "Sometimes the laurel wreath gets very uncomfortable, and I slip in at some theater like this. It all started in such a very different way. Let's see. I think it was a little more than 2,300 years ago that 'Medea' was produced for the first time. You should have heard the critics. 'It's good,' they said, 'but it's not art.' I didn't mind at the time, because every one seemed to like it, and I was too busy writing another play to bother about the critics. Now things are completely reversed—the critics admit that the play is art, but imply that it can't be popular. I'm inclined to the belief that these modern critics are right. So many playwrights have rewritten 'Medea' for their own generation since I borrowed the idea from a hack friend of mine in Athens that 'Medea' has to be a classic or nothing."

"You don't seem especially proud of 'Medea,'" we commented.

"Oh, it's all right. I like the central figure well enough, the barbarian woman against the background of civilization. It was a popular idea, too, because it was flattering to my distinguished fellow citizens who watched the play to think that only a barbarian woman could welter in crime as Medea could. Then, I think the chorus was more suited to us than it is to you. We were a queer sort of race, but we had an ear for the music of our language. In English, somehow, in spite